

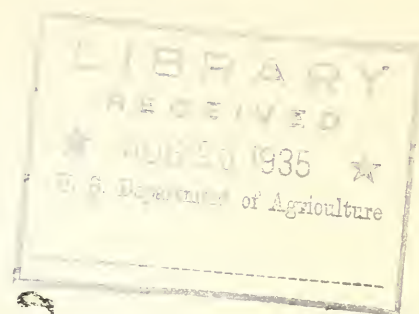
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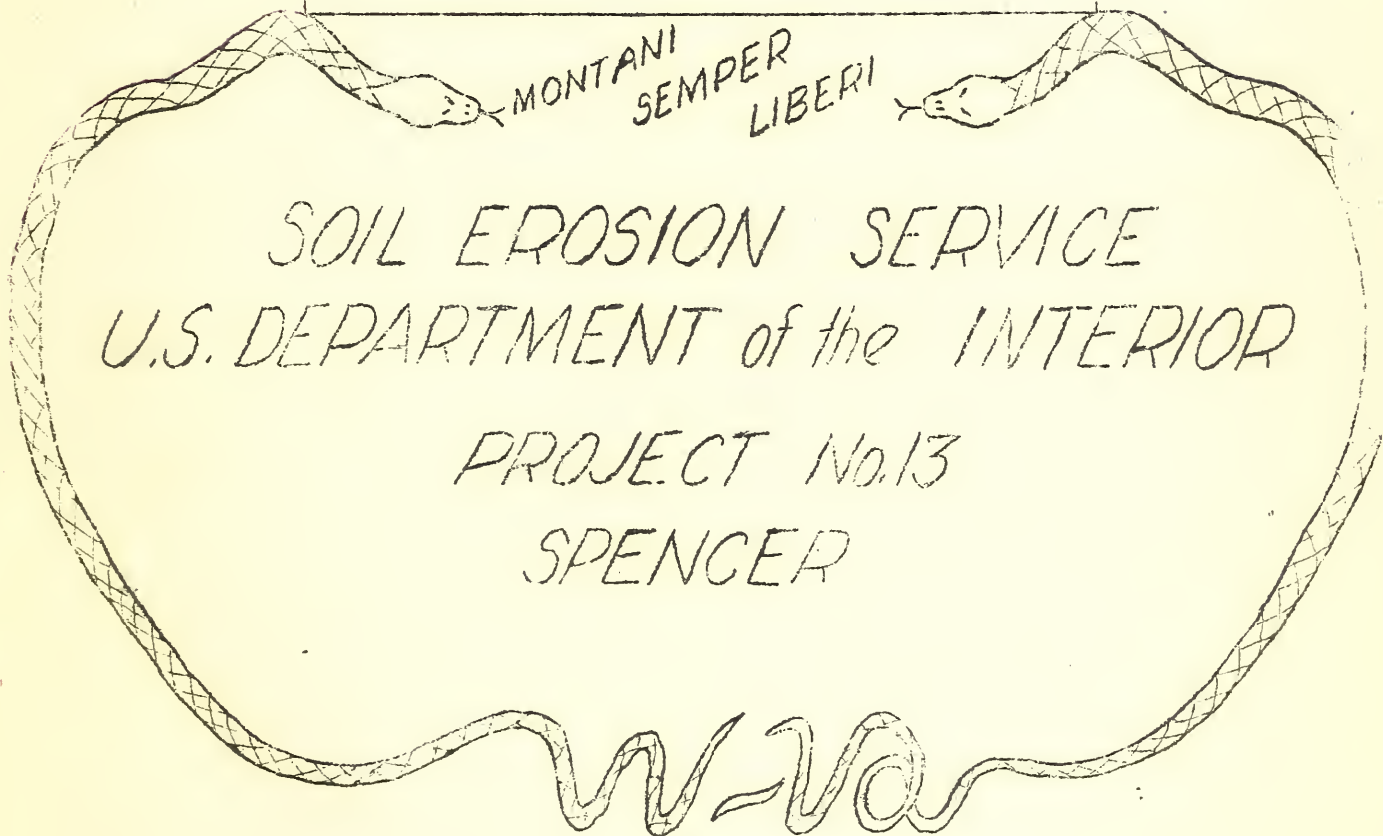
No. 3



FARM
COOPERATOR

MONTANI
SEMPER
LIBERI

SOIL EROSION SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR
PROJECT No. 13
SPENCER





INTEREST IN EROSION CONTROL

It is interesting to note the general attitude expressed toward erosion control. It is not surprising that there is intense interest in this subject within the area covered by the Soil Erosion Service projects, but the country as a whole is becoming aroused to the need for saving the soil.

Many of the newspapers and magazines are carrying articles on the menace of erosion and on the attempt of the Government to control this loss of soil. It is unusual for the press of the country to agree on any Governmental project, but, in this instance, we have been unable to find an article in any paper or magazine that was not friendly to this undertaking.

The recent issue of farm magazines have given considerable space to this subject. The latest farm magazine to reach our desk is the *Farm Journal* which, we note, carried a two-page article on erosion. The article, entitled "Highwayman of The Fields", likens erosion to a robber taking the fertility from our land. A heading proclaims in bold type "EROSION STEALS RICH TOP SOIL AT THE RATE OF AN INCH A YEAR." This first paragraph of the article states that: "This country has been more wasteful of its land than any other nation in the history of the world, yet nations and even civilizations have disappeared from the face of the earth as the result of soil washing. This problem is decidedly the most serious one confronting the use of the land."

An editorial in the *Atlanta Journal* says of the Soil Erosion Service, "A service more essential to America's fundamental industry can scarcely be imagined---But at last this all-important work has begun in earnest and effectively. It means a new day of security and prosperity in the country at large...."

STARTING CONTRACTING

The Soil Erosion stopped contracting about the last of September in order that the Agronomists might have a chance to re-visit the farmers, look over the work and give the Cooperators any suggestions or help that was necessary. During this time a representative of the Forestry Department accompanied each Agronomist in order to learn more about the area in which they are at work and also to learn the location on the farm where trees were to be planted. This work continued until about a week ago. During the past week the Agronomists have worked together on a few farms in order that they might crystalize their ideas and get valuable help from one another in order that they might do a better job of erosion control when they begin contacting the farmers again. In doing this, they have gone over six farms and made an intensive study of the erosion problems and of how they could best be solved.

This work is now completed and the Agronomists have started into the field to contract with the farmers. At the present time, we have on the waiting list 54,000 acres. It is the intention of the Agronomist, when he calls on an individual farmer, to solve the erosion problems on that farm as nearly as possible. He is interested in helping the farmer build permanent meadows on land which might be a serious erosion problem if used for a cultivated crop. He is interested in working out a pasture management program, whereby erosion will be controlled and the amount of pasture increased. He is interested in helping the farmer treat certain pasture lands with lime, fertilizer and so on in order to better control erosion. In other words, the work which the Agronomists have with the farmers is intended for the best interest of the farmer. It is to his interest to preserve the soil because it is from the soil that he secures his living.

THE PASTURE PROBLEM

Recent surveys, made by the Soil Erosion Service, show that approximately 55% of all the area included in the project is in pasture. A few years ago the farmers could boast of wonderful blue grass pasture and also of cattle, grass fattened, topping the big eastern markets. The conditions have gradually changed. Erosion was gradually taking away the valuable top soil. This continued year after year. Pastures were beginning to show that they were not holding a tight blue grass sod. The lime had been lost from the soil and the plant food was gone. Then came the drought of 1930. This was a fatal blow as far as the blue grass pastures were concerned. The blue grass that had been hanging on gave way and today those wonderful blue grass pastures, that in the past were the pride of this section of the state, are gone. It is a serious problem which we must face.

On certain areas where the erosion has not gone so far as to entirely deplete the top soil, it is felt that this blue grass can be returned by the proper application of lime and phosphorus. However, there are vast areas now in pasture where erosion has gone on until all the top soil is removed and where the slope is so steep that it would be impractical to spend labor and money toward the application of lime and phosphorus. Such areas are a problem of reclamation and should be so treated. It is probably better that they be fenced from grazing and planted to trees.

It is felt by the members of the Soil Erosion Service that a great deal of good can be done on certain types of pasture land by securing a scattered stand of black walnut and black locusts. A survey, made this past summer, on the effects of black walnut and black locust on pasture grasses, shows that there is a very decided improvement in the species and density of pasture grasses on land influenced either by black locust or black walnut.

Where the stand was not too thick, the grass had been grazed as closely or more closely than it had where it was entirely away from the effects of the locust or walnut. It is a common belief that livestock will not eat grass which grows under the trees as readily as they will in other places. According to the survey made this past summer this was not found to be true, except where the stand of walnut exceeded 100 good sized trees per acre. A great number of farmers realize the value of walnut and locust in the pasture field and have readily cooperated in work of this kind.

Another thing that is a serious handicap to the pastures in this area is the fact that they are over-grazed during the fall, winter and spring. If pastures are properly taken care of during fall, winter and spring there is not much danger of serious injury during the growing season. It will be the work of this Service to try to work out some method of pasture management that will protect as much of this valuable pasture land during the fall, winter and early spring as possible. In addition to this, an effort will be made to work out some system of pasture rotation with the farmer. Practically all farmers who have been contacted realize the importance of caring for their pasture and have been willing to cooperate in so far as it is possible for them to do so. With part or all the top soil gone, the farmer cannot hope to graze as many cattle in the future as he has been accustomed to graze in the past. It is the hope of this Service that, through demonstrations carried on, we will come to the point where land that is not suitable for pasture will be returned to forest. Such land as is suitable for pasture that is land that is not too steep for the use of lime and fertilizer, will be used and treated so as to produce more pasture than could be obtained from the entire area with no treatment and no management. At the same time, this rougher, steeper area will be used for the production of a crop of timber.

TREE PLANTING

The first of this week marked the beginning of forest planting in this section of the country. For sometime the people of this section have looked forward to the actual tree planting work with some hesitation and doubt. It is true that since this type of thing is new for this section, it would undoubtedly give rise to a good deal of interest and speculation by the public in general. For the past 200 years foresters have been studying the benefits that are derived from the practice of forestry and at this time, we are definitely aware of the fact that forestry does have an important role in the economic life of any community. For sometime past there has been a definite trend towards better land planning and use, and in keeping with this we are making use of forestry as an important part of our agricultural development.

Our plantings this fall will be made on the farms of Cooperators that are working with us in our fight to control soil erosion. We are receiving daily from the Department of Conservation Nursery at Lesage, West Virginia, 70,000 black locust seedlings. These black locust seedlings will be planted on steep barren slopes that, at present, will not yield any worth while returns to the farmers, and, if given half a chance, will grow into a crop of value to the farmers. These trees will be planted in rows six feet apart and each seedling will be six feet from every other seedling. This spacing will serve a two-fold purpose, in that it will bring

the young trees close enough together so that they will be forced to grow tall and straight and, in addition, they will form a protective covering for the soil. The labor for this project at present, is being furnished by the men and boys in our two CCC camps, and it is hoped that some local men might be added to supplement this crew at a later date. In addition to the locust seedlings that are being planted, a number of plantations of black walnuts will be made. We have been fortunate enough to secure a limited number of young black walnut trees and these, in turn, will be supplemented by several thousand bushels of walnuts. At the present time, we are limited in our selection of planting stock, due to the fact that we are unable to purchase any amount of other species of trees. However, once we get our nursery under way, we hope to grow a number of different species which will be available for planting and which will add materially to various plantations.

The farmers have responded to our tree planting program even better than we had anticipated and we hope that the plantations we are able to establish during this fall and next spring will more than justify their confidence in us. We want to assure each and every Cooperator that we will use every care and precaution within our power to make each and every plantation a success.

* * * * *

The Forestry Department of this project has procured 10,000 bushels of black walnuts for planting. Approximately 1,000 or 1,500 bushels of these have been planted in the nursery to produce seedlings and the remainder will be planted directly on the farms of Cooperators.

STREAM CONTROL

About once every year we are visited by an unusually heavy downpour of rain of sufficient intensity and duration to completely overflow the low lying areas, bordering our streams. The flood waters take with them much silt and trash and, at the same time, leave a great deal of it. The exchange would be more or less of an even one, but for the fact that the materials washed away were originally, either good topsoil in some farmer's field or the major portion of a curve in a stream bank, and that the silt deposits were left in undesirable places, in many cases almost entirely choking the original channel.

We view the damage caused and then and there vow to prevent its recurrence. But in general our fever wanes with the receding waters and the departing soils. If in a weeks time, the stream has cleared sufficiently to allow us to view a fish at a depth of say, 2 or 3 inches we are lulled to the point where we feel that it wasn't so bad after all.

The present stream channels are nature's means of carrying away excess waters. In the past they were adequate to cope with most floods. Now they seem unable to do so. Man has come in; he has destroyed the balance that previously existed, by leveling forests, by plowing, and by concentrated pasturing. The trees and grasses that originally restrained rain waters from rushing into streams are gone. The barren slopes left in place of vegetation can do little to stop water. Such is evident by looking at the yellow, muddy waters that persist for days following a rain.

Yes, we can do some stream control by straightening channels, by deepening them or widening them, and by keeping banks clear of trash and obstructing trees. But by far the greater and more efficient control will be found to include a balanced program pointing toward revegetation of those slopes from which pour the unrestrained waters that choke our streams and flood our bottoms.

ORDER OF WORKING FARMS

In the last issue of the Farm Cooperator appeared the statement that we hoped "to be able to reach, during the coming month, the 448 other farmers who have sent in an invitation card." This statement was intended to read, "during the coming months, but the s was unintentionally omitted. Of course, it would be impossible to reach all in one month.

We are continuing our policy of working farms in the order in which the invitation cards were received. When a card is received the date is stamped on it and the farm is worked in the order thus established.

Some of the first cards sent in were not stamped with the date received and, for this reason, it was not always possible to tell which came in first. Nevertheless, if your card was received prior to June 1 your farm has already been worked or will be worked in the near future.

Each agronomist will work the farms in his territory for which cards were received prior to June 1, before working any farms for which cards were received after that date.

From time to time we shall keep you informed as to the date of the cards we are working so that you may know the approximate time to expect

WEDDING BELLS

Since the establishment of the S. E. S. in Spencer four of the boys have entered into the holy bonds of matrimony. The most recent victim was Speicher. On Hallowe'en evening the other S. E. S. boys duly initiated him. Amid a blare of trumpets and drums, a wheelbarrow and torchlight parade was conducted to Spring Creek. On arriving at the creek another victim, Bailey, whose recent marriage had not as yet been celebrated, was pushed into the cooling waters of the stream.

The other boys who have taken the fateful plunge into matrimony, and who have been properly feted by the boys are Tinsley and Sharpe.

FIELD HEADQUARTERS

Construction work has been started on the building at the Reedy Forest Nursery. This building is to be 186' x 120' over all and will serve as field headquarters for the Soil Erosion Service when completed. It is to have a cement foundation and cement floor in part of the building. It is planned to have a well equipped machine shop in one section, to be used for repairing soil erosion equipment. The other section of the building will be used for storing trucks, wire, fertilizer, seeds, and other tools and material. In one section of the building will be located the packing room where the stock grown at the nursery will be sorted and packed. For some time the Soil Erosion Service has felt the need of a building of this type and it is being constructed with the idea of centralizing our work and thereby putting us in a better position to cooperate with the farmers and carry on our project.

LIME

Since the beginning of the Soil Erosion work, 9,881 tons of lime have been delivered to the cooperating farmers. In most instances, the farmers took the very best care possible of this lime and spread it at the earliest possible moment. In other instances, the lime is still piled, under conditions not at all favorable. It is strongly urged that all lime be spread on the area designated for its use as soon as possible. It is to the interest of the farmer that this be done.

The longer it is left exposed to the weather the more he is going to lose from wind and rain erosion. The sooner he gets it on the field the quicker results will be obtained in the form of improved pasture.

* * * * *

"Try not to keep ahead of the one behind, but to catch the one before."

FARMERS MEETINGS

In the near future it is the plan of the Soil Erosion Service to hold meetings with the farmers at school houses and community centers throughout the area. These meetings will be called by and will be in charge of the agronomists in their respective areas. Quite a number of farmers have expressed their interest in meetings of this type. Members of the Soil Erosion Service feel that a great deal of good will come out of such meetings.

At these meetings, the farmer will have an opportunity to discuss with representatives of the Soil Erosion Service and fellow farmers the problems with which he is confronted.

This type of meeting will be an excellent opportunity to get suggestions and help from the cooperating farmers throughout the area as to how the program can be improved.

FROM A COOPERATOR

Palestine, W. Va.
Oct. 22, 1934.

Soil Erosion Service,
Spencer, W. Va.

Greetings:

I wish to tender my thanks for the prize awarded me for naming the Farm Cooperator.

While words will not express my appreciation for the award, May I be permitted by cooperation to show my thanks and appreciation. Let me say further that my acre sown to barley September 5th, and to be sown to alfalfa in the spring of '35, is making a fine growth; some bunches standing 18 inches high.

My neighbors have fine stands of Barley considering the dry weather.

I surely should like to visit the S.E.S. office in Spencer. Wishing health and prosperity to all, I remain

Respectfully, L.B. Rader.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
SOIL EROSION SERVICE
Spencer, West Virginia

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